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THE UNCONQUERED AIR

BY

FLORENCE

EARLE

COATES

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By Florence Earle Coates

THE UNCONQUERED AIR AND OTHER POEMS.

POEMS.

MINE AND THINE.

LYRICS OF LIFE.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE UNCONQUERED AIR

AND OTHER POEMS

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The Riverside Press Cambridge
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Published November 1912

$1.25
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TO

HORACE HOWARD FURNESS

With kind and cruel ministries
    Nature assays her metals fine,
And Heaven, bestowing joys and griefs
    With equal hand benign,
Attempers what she holds most dear —
Adds now a smile and now a tear,
    Till she creates with touch divine
    A soul like thine, a soul like thine! —
Ever to loftiest counsels moved,
By all men honoured, and by all beloved.

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THE UNCONQUERED AIR

AND OTHER POEMS

POEMS

THE UNCONQUERED AIR

I

Others endure Man's rule: he therefore deems
  I shall endure it — I, the unconquered Air!
  Imagines this triumphant strength may bear
His paltry sway! yea, ignorantly dreams,
Because proud Rhea now his vassal seems,
  And Neptune him obeys in billowy lair,
  That he a more sublime assault may dare,
Where blown by tempest wild the vulture screams!

Presumptuous, he mounts: I toss his bones
  Back from the height supernal he has braved:
Ay, as his vessel nears my perilous zones,
I blow the cockle-shell away like chaff
  And give him to the Sea he has enslaved.
He founders in its depths; and then I laugh!

II

Impregnable I held myself, secure
  Against intrusion. Who can measure Man?
  How should I guess his mortal will outran
Defeat so far that danger could allure

For its own sake? — that he would all endure,
All sacrifice, all suffer, rather than
Forego the daring dreams Olympian
That prophesy to him of victory sure?

Ah, tameless courage! — dominating power
That, all attempting, in a deathless hour
Made earth-born Titans godlike, in revolt! —
Fear is the fire that melts Icarian wings:
Who fears nor Fate, nor Time, nor what Time brings,
May drive Apollo's steeds, or wield the thunderbolt!

WHY DID YOU GO?

Death called, — but why did you go?
Did you not know
That life is better than death,
That snatches the breath
Out of joy? — that love is better than death?

Did you not understand
How guarded the Land
Where death leads? — that howe'er the heart yearn,
One can never return
From the gloom
Of that dwelling-place lone that doth hold and entomb?

O my sweet!
Might I follow your feet, —
Afar from the sun and the bloom-scented air,
I would open once more
The inexorable door,
And drink of dark Lethe, your prison to share!

ODE TO SILENCE

O THOU, sublime, who on the throne
Of eyeless Night sat, awful and alone,
  Before the birth of Cronos, — brooding deep
  Upon the voiceless waters which asleep
Held all things circled in their gelid zone:
O Silence! how approach thy shrine
  Nor falter in the listening void to raise
  A mortal voice in praise,
Nor wrong with words such eloquence as thine?

Amid the fragrant forest hush,
The nightingale or solitary-thrush
May, on thy quiet breaking, give no wound;
  For they such beauty bring as all redeems,
  Nor fear to interrupt thy dreams
Or trouble thy Nirvana with a sound!

And though more fitting worship seem the breath
  Of violets in the sequestered wood,
The zephyr that low whispereth
  To the heart of Solitude,
The first unfolding of the bashful rose
That noiseless by the wayside buds and blows;

More fitting worship the far drift of clouds
  O'er azure floating with a swan-like motion,
The Siren-lays faint heard amid the shrouds,
  The voiceless swell of the unfathomed ocean,
The silver Dian pours on the calm stream
Where pale the lotus-blossoms lie adream, —

Yet, mother of all high imaginings,
  In whom is neither barrenness nor dearth,
Wise guardian of the sacred springs
  Whose fresh primordial waters heal the earth, —
O soul of muted fire,
Of whom is born the passionate desire
  That gives to beauty birth, —

All music that hath been, howe'er divine,
All possibilities of sound are thine!
  The syrinx-reed, the flute Apollo owns,
  Symphonic chords, and lyric overtones,
First draw their inspiration at thy shrine.
  There come heart-broken mortal things;
  There once again they find their wings;
There garner dreams benign, —
O nurse of genius! unto whom belong
Beethoven's harmonies and Homer's deathless song!

THE POETRY OF EARTH

"The poetry of earth is never dead."— KEATS.

THERE is always room for beauty: memory
A myriad lovely blossoms may enclose,
But, whatsoe'er hath been, there still must be
Room for another rose.

Though skylark, throstle, whitethroat, whip-poor-will,
And nightingale earth's echoing chantries throng,
When comes another singer, there will be
Room for another song.

HOW WONDERFUL IS LOVE!

How wonderful is love!
More wonderful, I wis,
Than cherry-blossoms are when spring's first kiss
Warms the chill breast of earth,
And gives new birth
To beauty! High above
All miracles — the miracle of love,
Which by its own glad and triumphant power
Brings life to flower.
Oh, love is wonderful!
  More wonderful than is the dew-fed rose
  Whose petals half unclose,
    In welcome of the light,
When first the Dawn comes robed in vesture cool
    Of fragrant, shimmering white! —
More wonderful and strange
Than moonrise, which doth change
Dulness to glory —
Yea, with a touch transforms the mountains hoary,
    And fills the darkling rills with living silver
        bright!

Not music when it wings
From the far azure where the skylark sings
  Is wonderful as love! —

Not music when it wells
From the enchanted fairy-haunted dells
Where, shrined mid thorn and vine —
  An ecstasy apart,
  Drawn from the life-blood of a yearning heart —
  The nightingale pours forth forever
  The rapture and the pain, that naught can sever,
Of love which mortal is, yet knows itself divine!

HIS FACE

They tell you Lincoln was ungainly, plain?
To some he seemed so: true.
Yet in his look was charm to gain
E'en such as I, who knew
With how confirmed a will he tried
To overthrow a cause for which I would have died.

The sun may shine with naught to shroud
Its beam, yet show less bright
Than when from out eclipsing cloud
It pours its radiant light;
And Lincoln, seen amid the shows of war
Clothed in his sober black, was somehow felt the more

To be a centre and a soul of power, —
An influence benign
To kindle in a faithless hour
New trust in the divine.
Grave was his visage, but no cloud could dull
The radiance from within that made it beautiful.

A prisoner, when I saw him first —
Wounded and sick for home —

His presence soothed my yearning's thirst
While yet his lips were dumb ;
For such compassion as his countenance wore
I had not seen nor felt in human face before.

And when, low-bending o'er his foe,
He took in his firm hand
My wasted one, I seemed to know
We two were of one Land ;
And as my cheek flushed warm with young surprise,
God's pity looked on me from Lincoln's sorrowing eyes.

His prisoner I was from then —
Love makes surrender sure —
And though I saw him not again,
Some memories endure,
And I am glad my untaught worship knew
His the divinest face I ever looked into !

LULLABY

Day is stealing down the West,
  Tender, drowsy sounds are heard;
  Closer now each downy bird
Creeps 'neath mother-wings to rest.
In the fading sky afar,
  Kindled by some angel hand,
Twinkling comes a tiny star, —
  Baby's guide to Sleepy-Land.

Cooler, darker grows the air,
  Eerie shadows haunt the room;
In the garden, through the gloom,
  'Wildering bats and owlets fare;
But the lambs and birdies seem
  Happy now at home to keep,
And a darling little dream
  Smiles at baby in his sleep.

DEATHLESS DEATH

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD WATSON GILDER

We who have seen the seed fall without sound
Into the lifeless ground,
Through wintry days are tempted to forget
How Spring will come with the first violet
In her dark hair,
Fresh and more fair
Than we remembered her, a glad surprise
In the veiled azure of her shadowy eyes.

Fear doth the heart deceive,
And still we grieve
Where we should lift the voice
In triumph, and rejoice
Amid our sorrow,
Because of what the past
Has given that is beauteous and shall last—
A heritage of blessing for the morrow.

Lo, in what perfect trust
Nature confides her darlings to the dust!
The rose, the crocus, the narcissus sweet,
She lays to rest, undoubting, at her feet

Who from the meadows bright
Was snatched away to rule in the sad light
Of Hades, and to learn
Its lessons stern.
For Nature's faith is deep
That, waking from the dark and dreamless sleep,
Her flowers toward the sun shall wistful yearn,
And in the fragrant breast of Proserpine return.

Ah, lover true of men,
Forgive, forgive us, then,
If choked by tears we falter in our praise,
Remembering that we no more again
Shall hold glad converse with thy spirit brave,
Nor from thy lips hear words that lift and save,
Through all the lengthening number of our days!

By the great Silence thou art set apart
From all the restless travail of the heart
That beats in us
So passionate and strong —
Art passed beyond the evening angelus
And Memnon's morning song.

. . . . . .

Man's life on earth — how brief!
Yet we with Nature hold the high belief,
E'en when our hearts are breaking,
That death is but the vital way,

Darkness the shadow of the day,
And sleep the door to waking!

And shall we still with tears
Pay tribute sad to one whose soul endears
Even the dark, dark river it hath crossed?
Shall we in grief forget
The sweetness and the glory of our debt,
And that no good, once given, can be lost?

Distant thy dwelling seems,
Poet and patriot!—but, ah, thy dreams
Are living as the flame of sacrifice!
Therefore love's roses now
We lay amidst the laurel for thy brow,
Grateful that souls like thine our earth emparadise.

THE "UNFINISHED" SYMPHONY

O MUSIC of divine imagining!
  Does he not hear you in his dreams to-night?
Can you no wonder to his spirit bring —
  And no delight?

His love created you; his hopes, his fears,
  Are poignant in these tones, surmounting death —
These melodies that dim the eyes with tears,
  And snatch the breath! . . .

And can he longer sleep, nor note this strain
  Whose magic enters now, with lovelier art
That like a benediction thrills the brain
  And fills the heart?

Ah, not to one shall all earth's joys belong!
  So have the gods ordained, whom we obey,
Lest mortal men should deem themselves as strong,
  As blest as they.

On Schubert, out of love, the ecstasy
  That wrote this godlike music they conferred:
To us they gave to *hear* the symphony
  He never heard!

IN THE TOWN A WILD BIRD SINGING

"Hear me, Theresa, Theresa, Theresa!"

HARK! Do I dream? Nay, even now I heard
The whitethroat's music, tremulous yet clear:
The very plaint, O lonely bird,
That often midst the greening woods hath stirred
My heart; but never here!

This is the City! High above the street,
Before my window singing in the dawn,
By what imagination dost thou cheat
Thy hope to utter melody so sweet,
Far from thy groves withdrawn?

Thy tones transport me, wistful, to the North,
Seeming to lay a touch upon my brow
Cool as the balsam-laden airs that now
Through pine-woods blow: they woo my spirit forth —
Forth of the town — forth of myself. But thou?

Dost thou an exile wander from thy home
Or art thou hast'ning thither?

Through what beguilement dost thou friendless
roam?
And goest thou — ah, whither?

Day quickly fades, Night may refuse her star,
Clouds may arise, and elemental strife, —
Ah, hapless bird! what *wanderlust* of life
Betrayed thy wings so far?

Full as my soul of tremulous desires,
Thy voice I hear in supplication rise.
"Theresa!" dost thou call? Unto the skies
The plaint, adoring, holily aspires: —
"Theresa!" Is it she keeps watch o'er thee? —
Homeless — but free?

Wise minstrel! Thou dost well to call on her;
No saint was ever lovelier.
Her heart had room for such wide tenderness
As his who "Little Sister" called the birds,
And pity, deeper than all words,
Taught her, like him, to bless.

Silent? Where art thou? Lo, the City wakes!
Toil's round begins, and calm the world forsakes.
Thou, too, art gone! — nor evermore shalt come
Without my window here at dawn to sing.
Adieu, strange guest! Theresa guide thy wing
Safe to the sweet wild woods that are thy home!

ROBERT BROWNING

"Never say of me that I am dead!"

GREAT-HEARTED son of the Titan mother, Earth,
Fed at her breast,
He builded upward from the solid ground,
While listening ever for the heavenly sound
Of higher voices, to his soul addressed.

The elemental mother, lending might
With vital breath,
Made him, with her instinctive courage, brave;
And the immortals to his spirit gave
Their deeper knowledge and their scorn of death.

So evermore with energy and joy,
He followed Truth:
Still for the message and the vision sought,
Still to the temple of her worship brought
The imagination of unaging youth,

And in its largeness ever viewing life,
Perceived its goal
To be beyond the bounds of space or time.
He strove to picture it in powerful rhyme;
But what he painted ever — was the soul!

Ay, 't was the soul that moved, delighted him,
  Absorbed his care,
From early days in English Camberwell
To that far hour when tolled for him a knell,
  Mournful across the deep, from Venice the all
    fair.

Voiceless he sleeps, his giant task performed;
  But in his stead,
Brave Caponsacchi, poignantly alive,
Pippa, beloved Pompilia, and Clive,
  Forbid the world to think of him as dead!

ÉASTRE

I, WHO am ever young,
Am she whom Earth hath sung
From the far ages when from death awaking
She felt the dawn of life within her breaking —
A strange and inexperienced delight —
That warned the desert places of her night,
And, after bondage long,
Left her divinely free
To worship with an ecstasy,
Voiceless, that yet was song!

I am that she, Astarte named,
By proud Phœnicia and Assyria claimed,
Adored by Babylon and Naucratis.
From the moon, my throne of bliss,
On famed Hieropolis
Where stood my temple sanctified and hoary,
I poured such floods of silver glory
That mortals — blest my *palest* beams to see —
Fell prone upon the earth and worshiped me!

I am Aurora — goddess of the dawn!
To heaven in my orient car updrawn,
While wingéd joys fly after,

I part with roseate hand the curtained dark.
Mid bird-songs and celestial laughter,
I perfume all the æther with my breath,
And putting by the envious clouds of Death,
With my insistent yearning
Rekindle the sun's fire and set it burning.

Persephone am I — the Spring!
Whom all things celebrate and sing.
When glad from Hades' sombre home
Back to the dear, dear earth I come,
The gods themselves, my way befriending,
Look down on me with shining eyes benign,
And grant that, to my mother's arms ascending,
Of miracles the loveliest shall be mine.

Howe'er men speak my name
I ever am the same, —
In herb and tree and vine and blossoming flower,
Regenerating, consecrating power,
Youth am I and delight.
Astarte or Aurora, still the priest
Of mysteries beneficently bright.
The vivifying glory of the East,
The Spring, in vesture of transparent dyes
'Broidered with blossoms and with butterflies,
The door that leads from gloomy vasts of Death, —
I resurrection am! — new life! new breath!

SONG

My love is fairer than the tasseled corn.

My love is fairer than the tasseled corn
  That matches with its gold the golden day;
My love is sweeter than the breath of morn
  Fragrant with new-mown hay.
There 's nothing dearer or more tender,
And day by day the Graces lend her
A smile, a tear, to bind the heart
  And keep it hers alway!

THE TOMB SAID TO THE ROSE

After the French of Victor Hugo.

The tomb said to the rose:
— "With the tears thy leaves enclose,
What makest thou, love's flower?"
The rose said to the tomb:
— "Ah, tell me of all those whom
Death gives into thy power!"

The rose said: — "Tomb, 't is strange,
But these tears of love I change
Into perfumes amber sweet."
The tomb said: — "Plaintive flower,
Of these souls, I make each hour
Angels, for heaven meet!"

EXALTATION

After the French of Victor Hugo.

ALONE by the waves, on a starlight night,
No mist on the sea, not a cloud in sight,
  My eyes pierced further than earth's desires;
And nature — all nature, the hills, and the woods,
Seemed to question, with murmur of myriad moods,
  The waves of the sea and the heavenly fires.

And the infinite legion of golden stars
Replied in a chant of harmonious bars,
  Their scintillant crowns seeming earthward to nod;
And the waves, which no puissance can rule or arrest,
Made answer, while curbing the foam of each crest:
  — It is God! it is God! it is God!

CENDRILLON

"Vous l'avez dit: je suis le rêve."

I AM a dream,
A fairy gleam
Of rose and amethyst;
A creature of the moonlight and the mist,
Woven of stars that, meeting, silent kissed.
Think of me as a dream!

I am a note of melody that woke
Within your breast, and to your longing spoke:
A lonely strain
Of ecstasy and pain;
A hope that, glimpsed, must fade;
A form, illusion made,
That, vanishing, shall come no more again!

Regret me not that I
Must like to music die!
The virgin rose,
In blossoming, hastes to its fragrant close,
And whatsoe'er this magic hour I seem,
I am enchantment, only, and a dream,—
Love always is a dream!

ODE ON THE CORONATION OF KING GEORGE V

"I have vowed to God to lead a right life in all things, to rule justly and piously my realms and subjects, and to administer just judgment to all. If heretofore I have done aught beyond what was just, through headiness or negligence of youth, I am ready with God's help to amend it utterly." — *King Canute's letter to his English subjects.*

WHEN Nature takes away the things we prize,
With all a mother's patient tenderness
She soothes us, and from treasure limitless
Brings forth new joys to gladden our grieved eyes.

Before the leaves fall fluttering to the ground
Affrighted at the very breath and sound
Of the wind's passion, she from blight and storm
Garners the seeds of Summer, safe and warm.

She knows, though glad and sweet the wild bird sing,
How soon the trillium of the wood shall fade, —
Nor longer with its stars illume the shade, —
She knows, and harvests for a future Spring;

And though about her winds of Autumn sigh,
And though the rose — the rose, itself, must die,

And though the lordly pine that scorns to bend
Must fall at last, — she knows there is no end.

Sure of her birthright — elemental, vast, —
Calmly she waits; but man, to whom is given
Earth in its fullness and the dream of heaven,
Still looks with fond regret unto a past

Whose colors fade not in the distant light,
But rather to his worship grow more bright,
And careless as to that the future saith,
Pays tribute to the nothingness of death.

I

When the fourth Henry, in that chamber called
Jerusalem, lay dying, with what fear,
Knowing the Angel-of-the-Shadow near,
Must he have viewed the future and, appalled,
Beheld succeeding to his perilous throne —
To reign and rule alone —
One who to Folly turned a laughing face,
Dallied with Fortune, and out-dared Disgrace.

More grievous, as the fatal hour drew nigh,
More dreadful than the death he might not fly,
More poignant than regret or mortal pain
Or memories of woeful Richard slain, —
More tragic than all else to him the thought
That his own offspring, in but little while,

Consorting with the worthless and the vile,
Should bring his dearly purchased good to naught.

Fainting, the King saw sorrows multiply,
And out of weakness dared to prophesy
Evil of Harry Monmouth! nor might guess
How idle his distress
For one whose future Honour should secure
In human hearts and in heroic story, —
The King new found, new crowned, at Agincourt, —
Great England's darling and her future glory!

II

But how should doubt not add to care its pain
When, after Mary Tudor's baleful reign,
Forth came from prison drear
Another Queen? Yet 't was her spirit, fired
By grave ambition, nobly men inspired
To victories thrice dear, —
Giving her Age to breathe immortal breath,
Illustrious in the name Elizabeth!

III

Still with misgiving crowns are laid
Upon the brow of kings.
Yet oft have fairest plantings been repaid
With poorest harvestings,
While following vain auguries of ill
To man have come, beneficently born,

Such reigns as his whose tact and generous will
The Nations of the earth late joined to mourn.

But no misgiving clouds the Future now!
In all the ages rarely hath there been
Such light of hope upon the forehead seen
As that which haloes her auroral brow,
Whose puissance shall uplift the poor and weak,
Whose love shall teach, to such as wisdom seek,
That they are blest who give, they only free
Who in the strength of Law find liberty!

IV

England, it is thy coronation hour!
Doubt is of high and ancient lineage,
But faith is more than plenitude of power,
And now — distrust were treason. Turn in pride,

O England, to thy happy heritage!
And as the bridegroom forth to meet the bride
Fares smiling, so, from cloudy griefs of night,
Turn thou where lovely dawns the day's new light,

And with wise trust, the fruit of loyalty,
To his great father's throne
Make doubly welcome Alexandra's son —
Thy son, O England! — worthy thine to be!

Far from thy beauteous isle, across the Sea,
A Sister-Land prays heaven for him and thee —
Prays that the coming ages still may sing
The blessings of his reign. God save the King!

BETTER TO DIE

Better to die, where gallant men are dying,
  Than to live on with them that basely fly:
Better to fall, the soulless Fates defying,
Than unassailed to wander vainly, trying
  To turn one's face from an accusing sky!

Days matter not, nor years to the undaunted;
  To live is nothing, — but to *nobly* live!
The poorest visions of the honour-haunted
More worth than doubtful pleasure-masks enchanted,
  They win new life who life for others give.

The planets in their watchful course behold them —
  To live is nothing, — but to nobly live! —
For though the Earth with mother-hands remold them,
Though Ocean in his billowy arms enfold them,
  They are as gods, who life to others give!

YESTERDAY

My soul is fain to drink of joy;
Thy cup is full of tears.
Ah, take it from me, nor destroy
The dream of future years!
Thy face is fair, but grief is there —
And grief but wastes and sears.

We two have been companioned long;
Now straightway let us part!
Another and a dearer song,
By some mysterious art,
Draws young, sweet breath while thy lips of death
Yet whisper to my heart.

Ah, joy it is a timid thing,
And easily 't is slain;
A tender firstling of the spring,
It shrinks at touch of pain;
Then haste away, dread Yesterday!
Nor hither come again!

So quickly? But who goes with thee,
Unrecognized before?

Are hope, alas! and memory
  Thus joined forevermore?
Then must thou stay, O Yesterday!
  Lest joy, too, quit my door.

CUPID AND THE MUSES

" Revetior illas, mater; nam venerandae sunt, et semper quiddam commeditantur. . . . " — LUCIAN.

ONCE lovely Venus to her wayward boy —
Her wilful torment and her keen delight —
Spake chidingly: — " Why must you me annoy
With your capricious wiles by day and night?
Perplexing child, display your arts elsewhere:
Turn you to those whom idly now you spare!
Cold in content, and armored in their pride,
Behold the Muses! — let them claim your care!"
To whom the laughing Cupid: — "Nay, I've tried
What ways I know, to move those ladies fair;
But, ah, my mother, they're so occupied!"

LAST NIGHT I DREAMED

Last night I dreamed, mine enemy,
That you were at my side,
As in the days e'er coldness came
Our spirits to divide.

You smiled again with cordial eyes
And simple heart elate,
As in the happy olden time
That nothing knew of hate,

And I forgot, in converse glad,
The bitterness since then,
And nearer to my thought you seemed —
Dearer — than other men ;

For memory, with softened touch
Of pity, that caressed,
Made every kindness glow more bright, —
And blotted out the rest.

Last night from dreams, mine enemy,
I woke in tears, and knew
The soul, apart from mortal strife,
Has naught with hate to do.

LOVE IS PASSING

Love is passing through the street.
Love, imperishably sweet,
On his silver-sandaled feet
Draweth near.

Suppliant he came of yore, —
Comes he now as conqueror?
Will he, pausing at my door,
Enter here?

Once his lips were ruby-red,
And his wings like gold, outspread,
And the roses crowned his head,
As in story;

And, though these he now disguise,
Ever a lost paradise
In the azure of his eyes
Keeps its glory.

Love is passing through the street —
Love, imperishably sweet,
And were death our way to meet,
I would dare it.

Come he suppliant, as before,
Come he as a conqueror, —
So he turn not from my door,
I can bear it!

THE HOSPITAL

I

IN THE MATERNITY WARD

Is this the place? So still! — as with the hush
That follows storm.
Each on her narrow bed, they quiet lie —
They who, so young, have been so near to die —
Seeming of life but effigy and form.

How fair these girlish faces with closed eyes!
Passion and strife
Seem far from them. Are these beyond their reach?
Nay, see! — high-cradled at the foot of each,
A tender, new-born miracle of life!

On slippered feet the nurses to and fro
Move noiselessly.
A feeble cry! — a sigh half breathed in sleep!
But who is this that vigil here doth keep —
What Presence of august benignity?

O strangely moving vision! I behold
The Mighty Mother! —

She who, wandering friendless and forlorn,
Sought far and near the child herself had borne,
Finding nor help nor comfort in another.

Over the weakness here so proven strength,
She, heavenly,
Bends down; and, lo! the room becomes a shrine
And hallowed altar for a love divine, —
Pure as her love for lost Persephone!

II

IN THE SURGICAL WARD

"He that loveth his life shall lose it."

Last night a shape of fear
Came in the silence drear —
Unlooked-for and unsought —
With stealthy, ghost-like motion drawing near.

I could not see its face
In the unlighted place;
No sound of it I caught;
But, shuddering, I *felt* its creeping pace

A thing too dread to bear.
I knew that it was there,
And, my warm blood grown cold,
An icy breathing horror stirred my hair.

With pain-shut eyes I lay,
Wishing yet dreading day
That with strange pangs untold
Should come, my frame to rack in a new way,

And powerless to free
Myself, despairingly,
"From the body of this death,"
I moaned, "Who shall deliver me?"

Then, all my pulses stirred,
Awed and amazed, I heard —
Uttered with calming breath
Distinct and clear, apart from me — a word,

In far Judaea taught,
That instant freedom brought, —
Winging my soul's escape
Through the blest miracle of heavenly *thought.*

And in the dreaming dawn,
Waiting, all fear withdrawn,
I knew the coward Shape
From out my life forevermore was gone.

ONCE IN A STILL, SEQUESTERED PLACE

Once in a still, sequestered place
Where fell a shade, as of approaching death,
A lily drooped upon its wounded stem.
But, ah, how sweet its breath!

The shadow deepened into night,
Life flows no longer in the lily's veins;
But there where for a fragrant hour it bloomed,
A perfume still remains!

THE ORCHESTRAL LEADER

All eyes upon him centred, motionless,
Yet tensely watchful, vividly aware,
He stands an instant waiting. In the air
His mystic wand, uplifted, seems to bless
The Silence, while it calls to readiness
Forces that overwhelming Silence there,
Shall in its stead give Sound so sweet and rare
As must its every parting pang redress.

Magician and enchanter, he doth hold
In his fine hand tones, accents, manifold,
Interpreting the gods to mortal men:
His are the nerves that vitalize the rest;
The central heart of all beats in his breast;
Through him the very dead revive and speak
again.

IN LONELINESS

ISEULT OF BRITTANY

They are at rest.
How still it is — and cold!
The morrow comes; the night is growing old.
They are at rest. Why then, unresting, keep
In vigil lone, a pain that will not sleep —
An anguish, only to itself confessed,
That hushed a moment lies,
Then wakes to sudden eager life, and cries?

At rest?

Ah, me! The wind wails by,
Like to a grief that would but cannot die.
How sore the heart can ache,
Yet beat and beat and beat, and never break!

Hearken! — was that a child's awaking cry?

It was the sea — the ever troubled sea!
My little ones, it was the sea,
That moans unceasingly,
One dear refrain repeating o'er and o'er: —
"Tristram returns no more —

Tristram returns, returns — ah, never more ! "

Ashen the fire, —
Ashen : like dead desire.
The dawn breaks chill,
The children, sleeping, think their father here.
O Tristram ! might I, also, dream you near ! —
Mine — mine without regret !
As when I nursed your wound, and taught you to
forget
The cruel torment of your love for *her*, —
The poisoned wine, the still avenging hate,
The ship, the pain, the unrepenting Fate,
The yearning that is death, yet doth not kill !

Sleep, little ones ! your mother guards you still.

They are at rest,
Their sorrows over.
Forgetful of the tortured past,
They are at rest at last,
Sad lover by sad lover.
Oh, drear to me
The voices of the sea-birds, and the sea —
The sea that moans against the shore,
Repeating ceaselessly : —
" Tristram returns no more,
Returns — ah, never, never more ! "

UNPARDONED

"Some things I never would forgive!"
So said you, dear, not knowing
That love is dead unless it live
All charity bestowing.

Now, you whose heart love so could brim
In dire, dire need, learn this of him
Whose all to you is owing:
The one wrong man can not forgive
Is the wrong of his own sowing!

EVERY NIGHT AT MARATHON

"In their plains the neighing of horses is heard nightly, and men are seen fighting; and those who purposely come as hearers or spectators into these plains suffer for their curiosity; but such as are accidentally witnesses of these prodigies are not injured by the anger of the dæmons. The Marathonians highly honor those that have fallen in battle and give them the appellation of heroes." — PAUSANIAS.

EVERY night at Marathon
(Shepherd boy, beware!) —
Every night at Marathon
Sounds are in the air:
Ghostly sounds, the heart dismaying,
As of maddened horses neighing,
Over all the plain.

Every night at Marathon
(Boy, the vision fly!) —
Every night at Marathon,
'Neath a darkened sky,
Form with form in shadow blending,
Warrior-shapes are seen contending
As in conflict vain.

These are they at Marathon
(Mark, O shepherd-lad!)

Who, for freedom, to the gods
  Offered all they had ;
Who in danger, Death defying,
Triumphed over Fate in dying,
  For our gain — our gain !

Dæmons sentinel the field ;
  Venture thou not near, —
Neither seek those forms to view,
  Nor those sounds to hear.
This enough for thee : they perish
Never ! — whom the high gods cherish
  One with life remain.

MOTHER MARY

Methinks the Blesséd was content, her journey overpast,
Amid the drowsy, wondering kine on lowly bed to lie:
To dream in pensive thankfulness, and happy days forecast,
While over her the Star of Hope waxed brighter in the sky.

And yet, methinks in Bethlehem her spirit had been lone
But for the tender new-born joy that in her arms she bore, —
Ay, even though with gifts of gold and many a precious stone
Great kings had knelt with shepherd-folk about her stable door.

But every mortal mother's heart knows its Gethsemane —
That lonelier spot whereto no star the light of hope may bring —
Yet even in the darkest hour, amidst her agony,
Each still remembers Bethlehem, and hears the angels sing.

SO YOU LOVE ME

So you love me, have no care;
Mine will be the strength to dare
Perils that without your love
Greater than my strength might prove.
Never any knight who had
Felt your touch an accolade,
But had grown more brave, more true,
Sweetheart! sweetheart! —
  Loved by you.

In your chalice, my one rose,
All earth's fragrance you enclose;
Through your light, my one, one star,
Heaven draws me from afar.
Easy were it to lay down
All things save your love, — my crown,
And, in dying, life renew,
Sweetheart! sweetheart! —
  Loved by you.

THE BAND OF THE "TITANIC"

"These are the immortal, — the fearless." — *Upanishads*.

Up, lads! they say we 've struck a berg, though there 's no danger yet, —
Our noble liner was not built to wreck! —
But women may have felt a shock they 're needing to forget,
And when there 's trouble, men should be on deck.

Come! — now 's the time! They 're wanting us to brighten them a bit;
Play up, my lads — as lively as you can!
Give them a merry English air! they want no counterfeit
Like that down-hearted tune you just began! . . .

I think the Captain 's worried, lads: maybe the thing 's gone wrong;
Well, we will show them all is right with us!
Of Drake and the Armadas now we 'll play them such a song
Shall make them of the hero emulous.

When boats are being lowered, lads, your place and mine are here, —

O we were never needed more than now!
When others go, it is for us those left behind to cheer,
And I am glad, my lads, that we know how!

If it is Death that 's calling us, we 'll make a brave response;
Play up, play up! — ye may not play again;
The prize that Nelson won at last, the chance that comes but once,
Is ours, my lads! — the chance to die like men!

WINTER-SONG

To him who doth remember,
  June evermore is near:
He breathes her rose amid the snows,
  And still he seems to hear
The lark from wintry fields arise
Into the blue of summer skies.

Both April and December
  Time doth to mortals bring,
But in the seed, for future need,
  Eternal waits the spring;
And there be stars that never set,
For him who knows not to forget.

EROS

I, WHO am Love, come clothed in mystery,
As rose my beauteous mother from the Sea,
  Veiling my luminous wings from mortal sight —
  Whether at noon or in the star-strewn night —
That I may pass unrecognized and free.

Ignoring them that idly seek for me,
Unto mine own, from all eternity
  I come with heart aflame and torch alight —
    I who am Love!

What bring I them? Ah, draughts that sweeter be
Than welling waters of Callirrhoe!
  What give I them? Life! — even in Death's despite;
  And upward still I lead them to the height
Of an immortal passion's purity! —
    I who am Love.

DAWN

In Orient mystery
Thou veilest thee,
Pale daughter of the never-quenchéd Light,
Who from the couch of Night
By swift-ascending steeds to heaven art borne
Ere yet thy sister, Morn,
Awaiting, dons her wondrous vesture bright.

Like to a handmaid lowly, day by day
Thou dost prepare her way ;
But when soft-trailing saffron and warm rose
Half hide and half disclose
Her glowing beauty rare, —
When living things her sweet breath quaff,
And lift their heads for joy of her, and laugh,
Thou art no longer there.

Yet, ah, there moments be,
Child of Hyperion, sacred to thee,
That dearer gifts confer ;
When mortals lay before thy sun-lit shrine
A thankfulness of worship more divine
Than any offered her :

When, after night distressful spent —
Night sleepless and intolerably long,

Comes — unexpected, eloquent —
A tentative, faint note of song!
And the o'erwearied watcher sighs,
And lying still, with tear-wet eyes,
Hearkens the most celestial lays
Earth knows; and sees Night's curtains drawn
Slowly aside, and whispers: "Dawn!" —
Yearning beholds the tender gleam
Of Hope's pale star, where it doth beam
Eternal on thy brow,
And in its ray composed and blest,
Sinks into rest.

THE RETURN OF PROSERPINE

To welcome her the Mother wakes
  The myriad music of her rills,
And trims the border of her lakes
  With sun-lit daffodils:
Softly she counterpanes the leas,
  With primrose-bloom bedecks the vales,
  While answering her wooing gales,
Come ruby-pied anemones;
And as her wintry doubts depart,
  And brightening hopes foretell the morrow,
Such happiness o'erflows her heart
  There 's left no room for sorrow!

A SEEKER IN THE NIGHT

I LIFT my eyes, but I cannot see ;
I stretch my arms and I cry to Thee, —
And still the darkness covers me.

Where art Thou? In the chill obscure
I wander lonely, and endure
A yearning only Thou can'st cure!

Once — once, indeed, in every face
I seemed thy lineaments to trace
And looked in all to find thy grace :

I thought the thrush — sweet worshiper! —
From the minaret of the balsam-fir
Hymned forth thy praise, my soul to stir ;

I thought the early roses came
To lisp in fragrant breaths thy name,
And teach my heart to do the same ;

I thought the stars thy candles, Lord! —
I thought the skylark as he soared
Rose to thy throne and Thee adored!

But now a labyrinth I wind,
And needing more thy hand to find,
Grope, darkling, Lord! — for I am blind!

Ah, bridge for me the awful vast,
That I may find Thee at the last! —
Then draw me close, and hold me fast!

THROUGH THE WINDOW

THROUGH the window Love looked in
For an instant only,
And behold! — a little maid
In the silence lonely.

At his glance, her lily cheek
Took the tint of roses,
And her lips soft parted, like
A bud that half uncloses.

Gentle tremors filled her breast,
And her eyes grew tender
With a something wistful that
His presence seemed to lend her.

Ah, 't was strange! Love there looked in
For an instant only,
Yet the lass, so lone before,
Seemed, methought, less lonely.

POOR ICARUS

"Calbraith Rodgers, acclaimed the world's aviation hero, after an ocean-to-ocean flight of five thousand miles, plunged to his death."

Poor Icarus! — to soar so high,
Then fall! For you 't was vain to try
By cunning craft, on faithless wings,
To capture empyrean things
That still to men the Fates deny!

Yet, even knowing Death so nigh,
Had you reluctant been to fly
Beyond earth's sure, safe harborings, —
Poor Icarus?

I think not so. All, all must die!
But you the pathways of the sky
Found first, and tasted heavenly springs —
Unfettered as the lark that sings —
And knew strange raptures, — though we sigh:
"Poor Icarus!"

SECURE

Our single lives are circled round
By an embracing sea;
Are joined to all that has been, bound
To all that is to be;
The past and future meet and cross,
And in life's ocean is no loss.

We *know* there is no loss — and yet —
Dismayed, perplexed, — poor dupes of time —
We see youth stricken ere its prime,
And in our grief forget!
But pitying Nature takes our part:
Slowly she heals the breaking heart,

And Sorrow's self procures us gain;
For in her steps ascending higher,
We come, at last, where waits nor pain
Nor unfulfilled desire, —
Finding the path lit from above
That leads from love — to Love!

Nothing is premature with God:
His are the harvest-time and sowing,

The seedling nestled in the sod,
The flower in beauty blowing,
The languid ebb, the eager flow,
The pulse of spring, the brooding snow.

LINES FOR A FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Golden their days have been, for love is golden —
Golden as sunshine warm with life, not cold ;
Lighting earth's pathway with the blessing olden
That never groweth old.

It owns no *Past;* a help divine in sorrow,
A strength to overmaster each annoy,
Love holds the faithful promise of a morrow,
Immortal in its joy !

NO MORE, DEAR HEART

No more, dear heart — no more I moan
The loss of happiness, your gift alone,
For quiet thoughts I keep,
And in the lengthening, grief-subduing years,
Have lost the trick and sweet distress of tears.
I smile again — again, ah me! I sleep,
And half believe my heart grown cold,
Till other happy lovers I behold.

THE MAN-SOUL

He made it pure —
More pure than deep-sea water, or the dew
Distilled in mountain hollows: made it true
As heaven's o'er-arching blue,
Or as that orb that doth the main secure, —
The lonely mariner's guiding cynosure.
He made it sweet
As lover's lips that meet
For the first time, with tremulous delight;
Or as the tears that more than half requite
Their pain after long parting: made it brave,
Fearless of wind or wave;
A tameless thing with aspiration filled,
That dares where eagles may not nest, to build!

OMAR

An epicure in Pleasure's mart,
  Pursuing mirth, but never glad,
With melancholy songs his heart
  He soothed, and made a thousand sad.

THE YOUNG WIFE SPEAKS

HAPPINESS is everywhere! —
On the earth and in the air,
With the bloom and with the bee,
With the bird that wingeth free!
Happiness is everywhere! —
And it binds my heart to thee.

"Everywhere are pain and woe"?
Ay, belovéd, that I know:
None from grief is wholly free, —
It doth even visit me!
Yet to grief I something owe,
For it closer binds to thee!

Laughter have we shared and tears, —
Knowest thou which more endears?
Tell me truly! I would be
Wise indeed to choose, nor flee
Aught in all the gift of years
That would bind my heart to thee!

HEIMWEH

The birds returning seem so glad
  As from the South they come,
They teach my heart, forlorn and sad,
  How distant is my home:
O'er land and sea wild roaming free,
  They little understand —
Glad nomads — that there is for me
  One home — one only Land!

And yonder dancing rivulet
  That merrily on doth go,
Humming a tune I 'd fain forget,
  Adds something to my woe:
Ah, had it but a thought for me
  'T would either now be dumb,
Or it would croon a melody
  Less dear to me at home!

Fond memories of days of yore! —
  My heart so hungereth,
The smell of upland clover or
  The dew-wet violet's breath
Might quickly fill it with delight;
  But exiled here I roam,
And dread, beyond all else, to-night,
  The scents that speak of home!

FOR THE BIRTHDAY OF WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

MARCH 1, 1912

SEVENTY-FIVE glad years of blessing,
And the hope of blessing more;
Memories the heart caressing,
Dreams that beckoning wait, before;

Life — full life, made rich by giving:
Life that can create, and lend
To the poor — delight in living,
To the lonely — many a friend

Wisdom that can teach through laughter —
Seeming but to entertain,
Or through pathos which, thereafter,
Leaves no dull, regretful pain;

Years of blessing, years of kindness,
And the courage that can smile
Though the eyes be dim to blindness
With a sorrow, hid the while, —

These are thine, thou selfless schemer,
Chanter of brave carmina:
These thy gifts to us, dear dreamer, —
Traveler from Altruria.

LOVE AND THE CHILD

Love came into the world, and said:
"With the tender infant on this bed
Shall be my home; I will impart
The winning graces to its heart
That blessing in each pathway spread."

So — for Love crooned its lullabies —
His own smile dawned within its eyes,
And into its small being stole
The laughing radiance of his soul,
And all its eager sympathies.

Unconscious as the flowers that bless —
A tiny flame of lovingness —
To any palm it gave at once
A dimpled hand, in quick response,
Nor what "a stranger" meant might guess.

That to distrust is often well,
It heard with smile ineffable.
Then, on a morn, Love came to say:
"Thou child of mine, come, come away,
In Paradise to dwell!"

ON FINDING BUDDHA'S DUST

"One hundred million people will experience a thrill of religious enthusiasm at the recent discovery of a relic-casket near Peshawar, India, containing some of the bones of Gautama Buddha."

O ASHES of Gautama, once the shrine
And outer temple of celestial mind! —
Home of a spirit, pure and heavenly kind,
That moved by human sympathy benign,
Out-poured itself, like sacrificial wine,
To bring a light of hope unto the blind, —
O ashes of Gautama! earth shall find
Naught midst her buried treasure more divine!

Though, centuries gone by, an Emperor sealed
In crystal and in bronze this royal dust,
Time may uncover it through waste and rust;
But while man's heart to aught shall homage give,
Gautama's love, through sacrifice revealed,
Eternal as that heart itself shall live!

IN A TENEMENT

I THINK our alley 's darker now
  Since once I went away—
I can't exactly tell you how—
  In a strange place to play
With other children like myself,
  A whole long summer's day!

It was n't really there, I 'm sure—
  That place so strange to me,
For nobody was cold or poor:
  It just was green, and free,
And up above there seemed of blue
  A million miles to be.

The fairies live there!—little Ruth
  The lame girl told me so:
Yes; and I know it for a truth
  That there the fairies go,
And cover over all the trees
  With flowers white as snow.

The flowers made in Fairyland
  Have breath—oh, breath that 's sweet!

For once I held them in my hand —
  Far off from this dull street! —
And looked down in their hearts and saw
  The tracks of fairy feet.

I dream at night of that strange place,
  And in my dream, quite near,
They dance about before my face, —
  The fairies kind and dear;
And, oh, I want to go to them!
  You see, they can't come here.

DIVINATION

How do you know the Spring is nigh,
Heart, my heart?
Is it a something in the sky?
Is it a perfume wafted by?
Or is it your own longing's cry—
Heart, my heart?

Oh, yes, I know you 've ways to tell,
Heart, my heart,
When Spring released from Winter's spell
Sows amaranth and asphodel:
Ways tender and impalpable,
Heart, my heart:

Signs that have never yet betrayed,
Heart, my heart: —
The bluebird's note in a leafless glade,
An answering rapture, half afraid,
The dream-filled eyes of a shy, sweet maid,—
Heart, my heart!

IN MODERN BONDS

Early and late, one day but as another,
One night — one dreary night, like to its brother
Silent and songless, empty of desire, —
A numbness after unremitting tire, —
So, in a vicious circle bound alway,
From light to darkness and from night to day
I move: a thing mechanical, I ween,
As this my comrade here — this vast machine
Which seems more of me than my blood and bone;
Which more doth own me than my God doth own.

For what of difference is 'twixt it and me
Lies in myself a vague and nameless sorrow,
Baffling and barren as the flickering gleam
Of starlight fallen on a frozen stream,
Holding no ray of promise for a morrow
Whose moments, as they come and go, must be —
For one who welcomes nor the night nor morn,
Whose weariness scarce knows itself forlorn —
But portions of a dull, unwished eternity.

AN IDLE DITTY

'T is I have been waiting to know, dear,
The day that ye'r ship would come in,
For if I 'm to love ye at all, dear,
I 'm thinking it 's time to begin.

The mavis is singing hard by, dear,
The hedges are white wi' the may,
And there 's never a cloud i' the sky, dear,
To hinder a ship on its way.

Ye 've told me o' castles a many,
And though they 're but *castles in Spain*,
I surely were better in any
Wi' you, than alone wi' my pain!

The mavis that 's close to her mate, dear,
For no castle would part wi' her nest,
And the ship that brings you, though it 's late, dear,
Brings me what is worth all the rest!

FATHER

How should I dream but you were old
  Who seemed so strangely wise?
The truth, had I the truth been told,
  Had filled me with surprise;
But now that you are gone, alas!
  Beyond Death's voiceless sea,
Still, as your birthdays come and pass,
  You younger grow to me.

IN DREAMLAND

In dreamland is a castle fair
  Wherein my love doth dwell:
Its turrets waver into air
  From fields where asphodel
And poppy keep not watch, but sleep,
  'Neath an enchanter's spell.

Pale offspring of a starlit sky,
  One rose — for need like mine —
Has over-climbed the ivies high,
  About her sill to twine,
And there, abloom, with rare perfume
  Makes exquisite her shrine.

Still, night by night, the wondrous bird
  That ne'er is heard by day,
Thrills, with my heart's unspoken word,
  Those mystic turrets gray,
And heavened above, sings to my love
  His plaintive roundelay.

Ah, would that I, through tender gloom
  Upmounting, lover-wise,

Might find her in the fragrant room, —
  Her virgin Paradise, —
But for one night behold the light
  Beam in her charméd eyes!

Alas! I shall nor lead her down
  The steep and skyey stair,
Nor find her here in the dull town,
  The sunlight on her hair, —
Yet, could we meet, my heart would greet
  And know her anywhere!

TO THE AUTHOR OF "MADAME BUTTERFLY"

ON SEEING THE OPERA

Poet, it was your soul created her:
  Yours was the vision lovely and supreme,
  Yours the appealing, high-imagined theme,
That like a breath of attar-rose or myrrh,
Piercing the sense, made Art her worshiper —
  Made heavenly Music long to be, and seem,
  A part of the impassionating dream,
An added accent, beauty to confer.

And Music to that service, as desired,
Brought lofty harmonies — so love inspired —
  And melodies as pure as they are sweet;
Yet 't is the soul of Cio-Cio-San alone,
Untouched by any genius but your own,
  That makes the charm so lasting, so complete.

THE LOVE OF LIFE

"My son is dead!" the aged woman wailed,
"My son, who was the only help I had!
My good, good son is dead — my faithful lad
Who ne'er in duty to his mother failed!"

Eager to comfort her distress, I spoke
Words that have solaced many a soul bereaved
Since kingly David uttered them when, grieved,
First to its final loss his heart awoke.

"Though he, indeed, shall not to you return,
Yet, sorrowing mother, you shall go to him.
Lo, even now, your lamp of life burns dim,
And you may find him soon for whom you yearn!"

Sudden the tears ceased on that face of woe
As the poor creature turned my words to meet,
And sighed, to my amaze: — "Still, life is sweet!"
Then I perceived she had no wish to go.

A NARROW WINDOW

A NARROW window may let in the light,
A tiny star dispel the gloom of night,
A little deed a mighty wrong set right.

A rose, abloom, may make a desert fair,
A single cloud may darken all the air,
A spark may kindle ruin and despair.

A smile, and there may be an end to strife;
A look of love, and Hate may sheathe the knife;
A word — ah, it may be a word of life!

THE LOST GIOCONDA

THE world is poorer, Italy's fair child,
Lacking the face
That for so long its heart beguiled ;
Nor hopeth to replace
With all its riches multiplied,
Thee, eloquent, alone, art-glorified !

But somewhere, Mona Lisa ! quietly,
With folded hands,
And in thine eye's soft mockery
The look that understands,
Thou wearest, lost to us the while,
Thine own inscrutable, unaging smile !

TO ALICE MEYNELL

I MARVEL not that they have loved you so —
  The gifted ones who knew you;
Gazing upon your face, I know
  Why poet and why painter drew you;
Perceive the mystic thing divine
That brought their hearts to worship at your shrine!

How much the eyes are windows to the soul
  Your poet eyes have taught me, —
Those shadowed orbs that seem the goal
  Of all that fairest dreams have brought me, —
And, in their depths revealing you,
Win from my heart a tender homage, too.

THE SUMMER-TIME IS IN THE ROSE

The summer-time is in the rose;
'T is but to breathe once more
The perfume that its leaves enclose
The summer to restore.
But how should summer bloom for him
Who must its rose resign?
A winter, changeless in his heart,
Repeats: — "Not mine! — not mine!"

Ah, sorrowful to give in vain —
To love when hope is not!
To cover with a smile the pain
That will not be forgot!
To journey to a living spring
Of water, welling sweet, —
To long as with a desert thirst,
Yet turn away the feet!

THEY TOLD ME

THEY told me: "Pan is dead — Nature is
dead:
There is no God." I read
The words of Socrates, and then I read
Of Jesus; and I said: —
"*Divinity*'s not dead!"

Good can nor poisoned be
Nor slain upon a tree:
The soul of good, escaping, still is free,
And in its ministry
Lives God eternally.

TO R. R.

ON REREADING THE "DE PROFUNDIS" OF OSCAR WILDE

He stood alone, despairing and forsaken:
  Alone he stood, in desolation bare;
From him avenging powers e'en hope had taken:
  He looked, — and thou wast there!

Why hadst thou come? Not profit, no: nor
    pleasure,
  Nor any faint desire of selfish gain,
Had moved thee, giving of thy heart's pure
    treasure,
To share a culprit's pain.

In that drear place, as thou hadst lonely waited
  To greet with noble friendship one who came
Handcuffed from prison, pointed at, and hated,
  Bowed low in mortal shame,

No thought hadst thou of any special merit,
  So simple, natural, seemed that action fine
Which kept alive, in a despairing spirit,
  The spark of the divine,

And taught a dying soul that love is deathless,
Even as when its holiest accents fell
Upon a woman's heart who listened, breathless,
By a Samarian well.

FAIRER THAN VIOLETS ARE

Fairer than violets are
  That blossom in the virgin Spring,
More sweet than the song of birds
  When first of love they sing,
A gift of pure and perfect worth,
She came to this our darkened earth
  A smile of God to bring:

She came that we might lay
  Our griefs, submissive, 'neath the sod;
She came that light might beam
  From every path she trod;
She came that memory might confer
Blessing and hope, for, knowing her,
  We know the love of God.

EAGLES

GIBERT'S BATTLE FOR THE AIR

It rose, and swam into the sky —
  The man-made bird ;
And the great Eagle saw it fly —
  Saw it, and heard
The whirring of its plumeless wings, —
The bird that mounts and soars, but never
    sings !

The falcon-eyes that face the sun
  Blinked on the flight
Of the dread creature that had won
  The unwelcome right
To leave its native earth, and dare
Intrude upon the monarch of the Air !

As moved the monoplane, the man,
  Strange soul of it,
Sailing the sea cerulean,
  The whole of it
Seemed his ; ay, subject to his sway.
Then he beheld — an Eagle in his way !

Awed, each upon the other gazed
  A moment's space,

When sudden-swooping talons grazed
  The pale man face,
As the fierce earn, there, mid the skies
Struck with blind fury at his rival's eyes.

Up-fluttering, the feathered king
  Plunged down again.
His rushing anger seemed to bring
  Fate nearer; then
The man-bird knew the moment's strife
Not for supremacy alone, but life!

With nerve that grows, in peril, great,
  He toward him drew
A thing to strengthen him with Fate;
  Whence instant flew
A wingéd death, and far behind
Headlong the Eagle fell, the abyss to find.
. . . . . .

Thy fight was over, glorious bird! —
  Thy scornful strength,
Which the sky's sovereignty conferred,
  Subdued at length, —
An autumn leaf against the wind,
In conflict with a greater power — called
    Mind!

BASE-BORN

My parents had great joy, I wis,
Of their young days of love.
In thought they were as deathless gods,
Mere human laws above:
As deathless gods! But I? — alas!
Of joy what can I tell?
Who am but as a broken vase
Beside a brimming well.

My parents in each other's eyes
Beheld the heavenly stars,
And found in one another's arms
The bliss that heaven unbars:
They vowed when pleasure brimmed the cup
None should resist its spell:
They quaffed, — and emptied me of joy,
Beside life's brimming well!

THE MORNING GLORY

Was it worth while to paint so fair
  Thy every leaf — to vein with faultless art
Each petal, taking the boon light and air
  Of summer so to heart?

To bring thy beauty unto perfect flower,
  Then, like a passing fragrance or a smile,
Vanish away, beyond recovery's power —
  Was it, frail bloom, worth while?

Thy silence answers: "Life was mine!
  And I, who pass without regret or grief,
Have cared the more to make my moment fine,
  Because it was so brief.

"In its first radiance I have seen
  The sun! — why tarry then till comes the night?
I go my way, content that I have been
  Part of the morning light!"

A LOVER'S "LITANY TO PAN"

By the germinating seed
And the blossoming of the weed,
By the fruitage that doth feed, —
Oh, hear!

By the light's reviving kiss,
By the law that wakes to bliss
Butterfly from chrysalis,
Oh, hear!

By the raptures of the Spring,
And the myriad flowers that bring
Incense at her feet to fling,
Oh, hear!

By the water-lily shrine
And the syrinx that is thine,
By its melodies divine,
Oh, hear!

By the fragrance of the glade,
By thy slumber in the shade
And thy bed, of mosses made,
Oh, hear!

By the budding mysteries
And leafy glory of the trees, —
By the human eye that sees,
Oh, hear!

By the wistful hopes that throng
To thy chantry of sweet song,
By our power to love and long,
Oh, hear!

By the dawning's tender beam,
By the twilight's westering gleam,
By the soul's enduring dream,
Oh, hear!

By the summer's ardent quest,
And the balm of winter rest, —
By the calm of Nature's breast,
Oh, hear!

By the wonder of thy plan,
By thy boundless gifts to man, —
By thy deathless self, great Pan!
Oh, hear!

THE "TITANIC" — AFTERMATH

O NATURE! overmastered by thy power,
Man is a hero still
And knighthood is in flower!
All save his tameless will
Thou can'st subdue by thine appalling might;
But failest utterly to quench his spirit's light.

Yea, though he seem, in conflict with thy strength,
A pygmy of the dust,
Heroic man, at length
Greater than thou, through trust,
Sovereign through something thou can'st not enslave,
Finds once again, in death, the life he scorned to save!

KEATS

By the pyramid of Caius Sestius,
Unmarked for honour or remembrance save
By a meek epitaph, there is a grave
For sake of which, o'er oceans perilous,
As to a shrine, uncounted pilgrims come ;
Each bringing tribute unto one who gave
Life *beauty*, — the one thing man still must crave,
Though worshiping from far, with passion dumb.

The Eternal City by the Tiber holds,
In the broad view of Buonarotti's dome, —
With all its treasure, — naught that is more dear
Than the low mound that easefully enfolds
The English poet who lies buried here
By the pyramid outside the walls of Rome.

THE WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

"When the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows"

Would you feel the witching spell
Of the whitethroat, listen!
There are secrets he can tell
Of the marsh, and of the dell
Where the dewdrops glisten.

Poet of the brooding pine
And the feathery larches,
Dawn-lit summits seem to shine,
Lucent in each throbbing line,
Under azure arches.

All his soul a floating song, —
Sweet, too sweet for sadness, —
At his bidding, hither throng
Memories that make us long
With a plaintive gladness.

Ah, were all the woodland bare,
Should those notes but quiver,
Straight I 'd see it budding fair! —
And the lilies would be there,
Floating on the river!

A CATHEDRAL

ALL SAINTS' DAY IN THE GREAT NORTH WOODS

It rises by a frozen mere,
With nave and transepts of the pines
That towering mid the snows appear
Majestic and sublime ;
While, with a myriad fair designs
Of feathery-tufted tracery,
Their tops adorn with silver rime
The azure vault's immensity.

Rock-piled, the altar to the East
Lies argent-spread ; on either hand —
Meek servers at the lonely feast —
Surpliced and tall the birches stand,
Like ghostly acolytes ;
And through ice-mailéd branches pass,
Prismatic from celestial heights,
The tints of mediæval glass.

Awed, as in no cathedral raised
By human thought, alone, and still,
I muse on one who dying praised
The God of Being, here :

On him who welcomed with a will
The gift of life, the boon of death, —
The while he heard, deep-toned and near,
The solemn forest's organ-breath.[1]

[1] Robert Louis Stevenson at Saranac.

THE CHOSEN

Death pitying stood before one bent and old,
And said: — "Forbear your griefs, and go with me:
The tale of your misfortunes — all is told,
And I am come at last to set you free."

But, lo! the man fell trembling to his knees,
Affrighted, and entreating in sad plight: —
"Though poverty and pain deny me ease,
Yet spare me! — but a day — a single night!"

Then Death, disdaining misery so base,
Turned, silently, and sought whom life held dear.
He found you, my belovéd! in the place
You glorified, and touched you with his spear;

And as one startled wakes from a fair dream
He fain would dream again, if that might be,
You looked on Death clothed in his might supreme,
And gave yourself to him, — forgetting me.

All beauteous in the blossom-time of youth,
Ere yet a cloud your radiance could dim, —
You knew him for God's messenger, in truth,
And like an angel, went away with him.

THE SONG THAT IS FORGOT

TIME, like to sand from out the glass, unceasing
flows away;
Then wherefore deem to-morrow more worth than
yesterday?
The fairest rose the future knows Time darkling
will entomb
With the rose that breathed in Persia, long since,
its rare perfume.

If sands of time, effacing, flow, then what — ah,
what of fame?
Nothing is lost that blesses the hour to which it
came;
Nay, questioning heart, which gave it most the world
itself knows not —
The song that is remembered, the song that is
forgot.

AGAINST THE GATE OF LIFE

TO HELEN KELLER

As mute against the gate of life you sit,
Longing to open it,
Full oft you must behold, in thought, a maid
With banner white, whose lilies do not fade,
And armor glory lit.

Across the years, darkling, you still must see,
In the hush of memory,
Her whom no wrong of Fate could make afraid —
Of all the maidens of the world, *The Maid!* —
In her brave purity.

For she, like you, was singly set apart,
O high and lonely heart! —
And hearkened Voices, silent save to her,
And looked on visions she might not transfer
By any loving art, —

Knew the dread chill of isolation, when
Life darkened to her ken;
Yet could not know, as round her closed the night,
How radiant and far would shine her light, —
A miracle to men!

A REALM OF WONDER[1]

Far off there is a realm of wonder, —
    Know you its name?
No region the wide heavens under
    Could be the same!
Dark orange groves it hath, and alleys
  With sunlit verdure covered over,
High-mounting hills, great river valleys
  Enriched by crops of maize and clover:
A Land apart, from all asunder, —
    Know you its name?

Walls hath it — two. One — of the mind,
To the outside world forever blind,
Itself within itself hath still confined;
  Wherefore its brooding and exclusive spirit
Craves but for progress in experience sown,
Noiseless as Nature's own;
  And with that reverence it doth inherit,
Hearkens obediently its sages,
Mysteriously wise from distant ages,
  And with unconscious, tireless sacrifice
  Creates a paradise.

[1] See "La Cité Chinoise" of Eugène Simon.

A paradise you say,
Stretching away — and endlessly away! —
  A garden — lovelily abloom
With rice and silk and tea,
Cotton and yam and wheat, all fair to see,
  And breathing forth an exquisite perfume
Of mingled mulberry and orange-blows,
Azalea and rose:
  A garden, yet a tomb
Where myriads, sleeping, are remembered still
  By myriads more, who glad their precepts keep,
  And honour them in sleep.

What centuries of industry speak here!
What irrigating waters, silver-clear,
Skirting the uplands, rise, tier above tier!
  What thronged canals, through the Delta plain
      extending
Hundreds of miles!
  What junks, what bankside villages unending,
What cottages with brown and green roof-tiles!
What fanes! what wildwood temples without
      cease!
What unperturbed tranquility! what peace!

Far off there is a realm of wonder, —
    Know you its name?
No region the wide heavens under
    Could be the same! —

So calm, productive, full of beauty;
Unto contentment so inviting!
A Land, through service and through duty,
The past and future so uniting
That Death itself may not them sunder!—
Know you its name?

Back of the centuries its birth-hour lonely
Men vainly seek:
Of its beginnings legend only
And myth may speak:
Ere Greece of beauty dreamed, or Rome of power,
In some mysterious, unrecorded hour,
Darkling from hushed obscurity it sprung
When the Nile gods and the Vedas yet were young.

IMMORTAL

How living are the dead!
Enshrined, but not apart,
How safe within the heart
We hold them still — our dead,
Whatever else be fled!

Our constancy is deep
Toward those who lie asleep,
Forgetful of the strain and mortal strife
That are so large a part of this our earthly life.

They are our very own:
From them — from them alone,
Nothing can us estrange —
Nor blight autumnal, no; nor wintry change!

The midnight moments keep
A place for them; and though we wake to weep,
They are beside us: still, in joy, in pain —
In every crucial hour, they come again,
Angelic from above —
Bearing the gifts of blessing and of love —
Until the shadowy path they lonely trod
Becomes for us a bridge that upward leads to God.

O GIORNO FELICE!

My store is spent; I am fain to borrow:
  Give me to drink of a vintage fine!
Pour me a draught — a draught of To-morrow,
  Brimming and fresh from a rock-cool shrine:
Nectar of earth,
For the longing and dearth
Of a heart still young,
That waiteth and waiteth a song unsung!

Glad be the strain!
In the cup pour no pain:
Leave at the brim not a taste of sorrow!
  Spring would I sing! For the bird flies free,
  The sap is astir in the oldest tree,
And the Maiden weaves,
'Mid a laughter of leaves,
  The bud and the blossom of joys to be!

Ay, Winter took all;
But I heard the Spring call,
And my heart, denied,
With a rapturous shiver —
Like that that makes eager the pulse of the river
  When something at last tells it Winter is past —

Awoke at the sound of her voice, and replied.
A libation to Spring! — ah, quickly! pour fast!
She is there! She is here! — in the sky — on the sea —
In the Morning-Land waiting my heart and me!

DREAM THE GREAT DREAM

Dream the Great Dream, though you should dream
— you, only,
And friendless follow in the lofty quest.
Though the dream lead you to a desert lonely,
Or drive you, like the tempest, without rest,
Yet, toiling upward to the highest altar,
There lay before the gods your gift supreme, —
A human heart whose courage did not falter
Though distant as Arcturus shone the Gleam.

The Gleam? — Ah, question not if others see it,
Who nor the yearning nor the passion share;
Grieve not if children of the earth decree it —
The earth, itself, — their goddess, only fair!
The soul has need of prophet and redeemer:
Her outstretched wings against her prisoning bars,
She waits for truth; and truth is with the dreamer, —
Persistent as the myriad light of stars!

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

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